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CITY OF HAMMOND

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Bharat Mather, Regional Administrator
USEPA Region V
77 West Jackson Street
Chicago, IL 60604

U.S. EPA REGION 5
OFFICE OF REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

RE: Calumet Containers Hammond, Indiana

Dear Administrator Mather:

We wish to bring a matter to your attention that we hope can be resolved quickly and with a measure of just plain common sense. USEPA for over two decades has attempted to address the pollution issues associated with the Calumet Container site. The city of Hammond Air pollution Control Department filed a series of air pollution complaints against the company in the mid 1970's. When the Hammond Air Pollution Control Department observed contaminated runoff from the Calumet Container's site flowing across the Indiana/Illinois Stateline into Illinois, it notified the Illinois EPA and the Illinois Attorney General's Office of the potential impact on that state. The city of Hammond has taken an active role in identifying and responding to the adverse environmental conditions posed by this operation.

The USEPA has attempted to remediate the Calumet Containers site located at 3631 Stateline Road in Hammond, Indiana since a catastrophic fire occurred there in April of 1982. It was the city of Hammond that requested USEPA's assistance to the contaminated runoff caused by the fire. USEPA conducted an Emergency Response to that contaminated fire run-off. In 1984, a Planned Removal at the site took place under the authority of the USEPA. The Planned Removal required a 10% funding match from the State of Indiana. The State of Indiana did not have any funding source available to meet the match requirement - so the city of Hammond, utilizing local Revenue Sharing funds, met the State of Indiana's matching requirement so the second step in remediating the site could take place. During the city ordered demolition of the structures at Calumet Container, city representatives were informed by the demolition contractor that a large amount of records were left in the office and were going to be hauled away in the debris. Representatives of the city of Hammond secured those records, and immediately notified USEPA. USEPA attorneys Mary Gade and Michael Elam were given two 55-gallon fiber drums full of records so the USEPA could identify Potentially Responsible Parties (PRP's) for remediation of the site. City of Hammond representatives requested those records be returned once the USEPA evaluated them, however those records were never returned and are presumed lost or misplaced.

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Presently, the USEPA has made an effort to perform additional remediation at the Calumet container site. It has also made a determination to establish the final end use of the site. To determine the end use of the site it has partnered with a private group and secondarily with elected officials in the city of Hammond and the neighborhood organizations that have the Calumet Container site within its service area. USEPA has initiated this process without first consulting with local government officials and neighborhood organizations and without first completing an extent of contamination study. Although USEPA has information on soil contamination at the site, groundwater has evidently not been assessed and will not be addressed! Second, the procedure proposed for public and citizen input appears to be slanted toward organizations and individuals that are outside of the city of Hammond. A request by the Director of the Hammond Department of Environmental Management to the USEPA to obtain a list of the governmental participants to the end use determination was referred to an organization headquartered in Illinois. That request has yet to be answered. At a not well advertised meeting scheduled in the Robersdale section of Hammond on the end use of the Calumet Container site the two citizen representatives selected to participate in the future discussions were from the city of Whiting (Indiana) and the city of Chicago (Illinois).

The fact that citizens and governmental organizations outside the city of Hammond will be deciding the fate of a site within our jurisdiction without consulting the Hammond City Council and the city councilman elected to serve that area is unacceptable. In addition, the Calumet Container site is in the immediate service area of the Pulaski Park Neighborhood Association – a 501(C) (3) organization that has a stated interest in this site and has been involved in the remediation of several other contaminated sites in its service area: The West Point Project (Phase I development), the Industrial Fuels and Asphalt site (70 acre Brownfield site) in partnership with the Hammond Redevelopment Commission, the Hammond Urban Enterprise Association, and the Hammond Department of Environmental Management. The Pulaski Park Neighborhood Association has worked with those same governmental agencies to remove the abandoned underground storage tanks and remediate a former corner gasoline station site to construct a “pocket park” to beautify the neighborhood. Thus the city of Hammond and the Pulaski Park Neighborhood Organization have been very active in identifying and remediating contaminated sites within their respective jurisdictions. It is disheartening to think the residents of Hammond and especially those of the First District of Hammond are not capable of determining their own destiny and that others need to tell us what should be done.

Although we welcome the suggestions of others, the city and its neighborhood organizations, are in a position to map out their own plans for the community, once all of the facts are known and there is time to evaluate the alternatives. USEPA should begin to work with the city of Hammond, elected officials, the District Councilman, and the Pulaski Park Neighborhood Association to resolve this matter since it is our community and our neighborhood and we will be the ones most impacted by any decisions made about this site. Provide us with all the facts and we will then make a decision that best reflects the needs of our community.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Pucalik

Kathleen Pucalik, President
Hammond Common Council

CC: Mayor Thomas M. McDermott, Jr.

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